

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 SSM-03 AID-05 /077 W
-----221836Z 041555 /43

R 221541Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5365
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2022

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IS
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH TRANSPORT MINISTER GAD YAACOBI

SUMMARY: YAACOBI INSISTS THAT PERES WILL CONTINUE TO RUN FOR THE PREMIERSHIP AND THAT ANOTHER CONTEST FOR LABLR'S TOP SPOT WILL DEVELOP BEFORE THE END OF A NORMAL KNESSET TERM. MEANSHILE, PERES WILL RECEIVE THE SECOND POSITION ON THE ALIGNMENT LIST AND WILL ENSURE A SIGNIFICANT POST FOR EBAN. YAACOBI BELIEVES THAT THE ALIGNMENT, HAVING BEEN HURT BY RECENT SCANDALS, WILL LOSE FIVE TO TEN SEATS. HE TAKES A PHILOSOPHIC VIEW OF EMERGING U.S. EFFORTS FOR AN OVERALL MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT, CONVINCED THAT THEY WILL FAIL AND BE SUCCEDED BY A RETURN STEP-TO-STEP DIPLOMACY. END SUMMARY

1. CHARGE' AND POLITICAL OFFICER MET WITH YAACOBI MARCH 21 IN HIS OFFICE IN JERUSALEM. AS A PROMINENT AND OUTSPOKEN PERES BACKER, HE WAS ASKED ABOUT THE CONDITION OF THE LABOR PARTY IN THE WAKE OF THE RABIN/ PERES CONTEST. WOULD IT PULL TOGETHER IN THE ELECTIONS?
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IN RESPONSE, YAACOBI SAID THAT THE OLD FACTIONS WERE FAST DISAPPEARING. THIS WAS CERTAINLY THE CASE WITH MAPAI AND RAFI. AHDUT AVODAH STILL RETAINED ITS FACTIONAL BASE IN ITS KIBBUTZ MOVEMENT (HAKIBBUTZ HAMEUHAD), BUT ITS LINES WERE ALSO BEGINNING TO BLUR. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SOMETHING LIKE TWO CAMPS IN THE PARTY WERE DEVELOPING, BASED ON SUPPORTERS OF RABIN

AND PERES RESPECTIVELY.

2. YAACOBHI HIMSELF DISPLAYED NO "KISS AND MAKE UP" ATTITUDE AFTER THE PARTY CONTEST BETWEEN RABIN AND PERES. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT IN HIS VIEW PERES IS THE BETTER MAN, AND HE SAID CATEGORICALLY THAT PERES WILL CONTINUE IN HIS EFFORTS TO BE PRIME MINISTER. NOR DID HE THINK THAT THE FRUITION OF THESE EFFORTS HAD TO WAIT FOUR YEARS, I.E., UNTIL ANOTHER GENERAL ELECTION. FOR EXAMPLE, THE KNESSET ELECTION IN MAY COULD END IN A DEADLOCK, WITH THE ALIGNMENT UNABLE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT, OR NEW ELECTIONS MIGHT BE CALLED WELL WITHIN THE FOUR YEAR KNESSET TERM IN THE WAKE OF AN ARAB-ISRAELI AGREEMENT OR BECAUSE OF A SERIOUS DETERIORATION IN THE ECONOMY. IN EITHER CASE THE PARTY MIGHT REPLACE RABIN. YAACOBHI ADDED THAT ISRAEL'S BODY POLITIC HAS BEEN GROPEING SINCE THE YOM KIPPUR WAR FOR A NEW BASE OF STABILITY, AND IT WAS EVIDENT THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE RABIN HAD PROVIDED IT.

3. YAACOBHI FELT THAT THE ALIGNMENT WOULD LOSE GROUND IN THE MAY ELECTION--ANYWHERE FROM FIVE TO TEN SEATS. HE HIMSELF WAS NOT SURE THAT HE WOULD BE IN THE NEXT GOVERNMENT EVEN IF LABOR FORMED IT. IN ANY EVENT HE HAD NO PARTICULAR DESIRE TO RETAIN THE TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO. RIGHT NOW HE WAS CAMPAIGNING HARD FOR A SECURE SPOT ON LABOR'S KNESSET LIST. (COMMENT: AS A PROMINENT PERES LIEUTENANT, HE SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE IN THIS ENDEAVOR.) THE LIST WILL SHORTLY BE CONFIDENTIAL

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DRAWN UP BY THE PARTY'S REGIONAL BRANCHES AND BY THE NEW 819 MAN CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THE VARIOUS REGIONAL BRANCHES WILL CONTRIBUTE 40 PERCENT OF THE KNESSET LIST WITH THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE CHOOSING THE REMAINING 60 PERCENT IN ORDER TO ENSURE FAIR REPRESENTATION TO WOMEN, THE ORIENTAL COMMUNITY AND YOUTH. CANDIDATES FOR THE LIST WILL PROBABLY BE PROPOSED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE'S 51-MAN EXECUTIVE BUREAU---YAACOBHI STYLED IT "THE POLITBURO"--(AN INCREASE OVER THE PREVIOUS EXECUTIVE'S 35 MEMBERS)

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2022

4. YAACOBİ EXPECTS ABOUT A 50 PERCENT TURNOVER FROM LABOR'S PRESENT KNESSET CONTINGENT. MOSHE DAYAN, FOR ONE, HAD RECENTLY TOLD HIM THAT HE WOULD NOT BE A CANDIDATE FOR THE KNESSET THIS TIME. PERES WILL DEFINITELY BE NUMBER TWO ON THE LIST--EVEN GOLDA, WHO BACKED RABIN IN THE PREMIER-SHIP CONTEST, SUPPORTS THIS--MOVING YIGAL ALLON TO THIRD POSITION. BECAUSE OF PERES'S INSISTENCE, ABBA EBAN WILL PROBABLY BE ASKED TO JOIN THE NEXT GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH EBAN MAY OPT TO SUCCEED ALMOGI (WHO IS AILING AND CONSIDERED UNSUITABLE) AS HEAD OF THE JEWISH AGENCY. HE MAY TAKE THAT POSITION AND ALSO SERVE IN THE CABINET AS A MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO. YAACOBİ THOUGHT THAT POSITON 35 ON LABOR'S KNESSET LIST (NOT COUNTING MAPAM'S SHARE IN THE COMPLETE ALIGNEMNT LIST) WAS THE CRITICAL POINT; ANYONE BELOW THAT POSITON COULD NOT BE ASSURED OF ELECTION.

5. SINCE THE RABIN VISIT TO WASHINGTON WAS "NEITHER
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A GREAT SUCCESS NOR FAILURE," YAACOBİ THOUGHT IT WOULD HAVE LITTLE OR NO EFFECT ON LABOR'S CHANCES IN THE ELECTION. THE PUBLIC WILL FORTET THE VISIT IN TWO OR THERE WEEKS, HE BELIEVED, BUT LABOR WILL SUFFER FROM THE YADLIN AFFAIR, OFER'S SUICIDE AND "OTHER SCANDALS." YAACOBİ EXPRESSED HIMSELF AS RELAXED ABOUT PRESIDENT CARTER'S RECENT STATEMENTS

ON A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. HE HAD NO QUARREL WITH THE PRESIDENT'S USE OF THE TERM "HOMELAND" REGARDING A PALESTINIAN SOLUTION. IN THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE PRESIDENT USED IT, "HOMELAND" DID NOT NECESSARILY MEAN A SOVEREIGN STATE; IT COULD EASILY BE ACCOMMODATED IN A SETTLEMENT WITH JORDAN. HE SAID THAT THIS ATTITUDE, IN CONTRAST TO THE AGITATION IN THE PRESS, WITH ONE OR TWO EXCEPTIONS HAD TYPIFIED THE REACTION OF OTHER MINISTERS AT THE CABINET MEETING MARCH 20. (AT THAT SESSION YAACOBİ REPORTEDLY CALLED FOR A MAJOR POLITICAL DEBATE AT AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY IN ORDER TO PROVIDE GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERS INVOLVED IN CONTACTS WITH WASHINGTON. HE HAD VOICED OPPOSITION TO WHAT HE CALLED CARTER'S ADHERENCE TO THE BROOKINGS REPORT BECAUSE IT WOULD ENABLE THE ARABS TO TREAT THE 1967 BORDERS AS A JUMPING OFF POINT IN NEW NEGOTIATIONS.).

6. YAACOBİ SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THAT CURRENT U.S. EFFORTS AT AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT WOULD FOUNDER, JUST AS AMERICAN PLANS FOR A FINAL PEACE SETTLEMENT IN THE FIRST NIXON ADMINISTRATION CAME TO NAUGHT AND WERE SHELVED. AT THAT POINT PEACE EFFORTS WOULD REVERT TO STEP-BY-STEP DIPLOMACY AND U.S./ISRAELI DIFFERENCES ON BORDERS AND THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE WOULD BE PUSHED INTO THE BACKGROUND.

7. COMMENT: YAACOBİ CONTINUES TO BE A VOCAL AND ENERGETIC MEMBER OF THE CABINET. IN CONTRAST TO CONFIDENTIAL

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MOST OF HIS COLLEAGUES HE HAS LONG BEEN A LEADING EXPONENT OF ELECTORAL REFORM--NOW A MAJOR DMC ISSUE. DESPITE HIS BET ON THE WRONG PREMIERSHIP "HORSE," HIS INFLUENCE IN THE PARTY WILL PROBABLY BE PROTECTED BY HIS CLOSENESS TO PERES.

8. YAACOBİ'S CERTAINTY THAT THE ALIGNMENT WOULD LOSE FIVE TO TEN SEATS IS CONSISTENT WITH HIS EARLIER POSITION WHILE CAMPAIGNING ON BEHALF OF PERES. LIKE OTHER PERES STALWARTS, HE HAD ARGUED THAT ONLY PERES' NOMINATION TO HEAD THE ALIGNMENT COULD STEM THE HEMORRHAGE IN LABOR RANKS. WITH RABIN VICTORIOUS OVER PERES, YAACOBİ IS NOT SUDDENLY DISPOSED TO SEE THE ALIGNMENT'S PROSPECTS NOW IMPROVING. THIS ATTITUDE, APPARENTLY COMMON AMONG PERES-BACKERS, COULD WELL TRANSLATE INTO PASSIVITY --OR AT LEAST A LACK OF FERVOR--IN LABOR'S CURRENT KNESSET CAMPAIGN.
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Message Attributes

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